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FROM : AmEmbassy LONDON
SUBJECT: American Defense Policy Under the Nixon Administration
REF :

DATE: November 30, 1968

The enclosed two-part article by Richard Cox, taken from the Daily Telegraph of November 25 and 26, tackles the question of where American foreign and defense policy is headed under the new Administration. Cox runs the risks of all political soothsayers, but his essay, entitled "America Now the Reluctant Solider," is one of the most coherent pieces on this hazardous subject to have appeared here since November 5.

The article is worth close reading, but for the benefit of scanners, Cox's argument starts from the assumption that the Nixon Administration will operate, psychologically at least, in a post-Vietnam period. A host of factors -- over-commitment, expense, frustration, and pressing domestic problems -- will induce the U.S. to withdraw to a lower level of political commitment and military deployment in the world. Cox foresees a general decision, echoing the British, to intervene only in concert with other powers in the future, and to demand greater reciprocity for guarantees. Britain has forfeited the "special relationship" by her withdrawal from international responsibility, and American interest will be primarily to shoe-horn her into Europe. In nuclear affairs, the U.S. will go ahead with strategic talks with the Soviets if at all possible, but the ABM system is likely to be expanded. Poseidon is likely to be refused the British, whether under a Labor or Tory Government. The Americans will become progressively more reluctant to use their nuclear capability, the possibility of massive retaliation will recede ever further, and the flexible response strategy will continue to be pushed as the U.S. military presence in Europe is massively run down.

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"Where does this leave Europe, still confident in the American nuclear umbrella?" Cox asks in conclusion. "The answer must be 'In greater danger'... The logic of American demands for greater European conventional preparedness is clear, and Mr. Nixon's Administration is bound to force recognition of it on us."

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Enclosure: As stated

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America Now the Reluctant Soldier

A FOREIGN OFFICE friend once explained the basis of British policy towards the United States to me by quoting the rhyme: "Be sure to keep a-hold of Nurse for fear of finding something worse." There is a strong grain of truth within the cynicism of this remark, and indeed it applies to a good many countries, from NATO's European members sheltering under the American nuclear umbrella to Japan.

But Americans are becoming tired of being nannie, policeman and guarantor to the Western and third worlds. After the 1939-45 war, and particularly under Mr. Dulles, the United States' traditional commitments in South America and the Caribbean were added to by defence or military assistance agreements with a formidable number of countries. Some agreements were collective, as with NATO, CENTO, SEATO and the ANZUS Pact, others were individual, as with Japan, Formosa and Vietnam. As a result United States forces maintain some 97 contingency plans for rapid reaction overseas.

The United States Defence Budget of \$80,000 million (£33,000 million) takes half the entire Federal Budget and represents 10 per cent. of the gross national product. The Congressional defence Budget cut of \$3,000 million last summer is roughly six-tenths of Britain's whole defence budget. We spend under six per cent. of our GNP on defence, while most NATO Powers spend nearer four per cent. However you look at it, the disparity between the spending of the United States and that of her allies is considerable.

Quick Returns

Yet this lavish outlay has neither made her popular nor enabled her to win the Vietnam war, despite the enduring belief of many Americans that if you pour enough money onto a problem it will cease to exist. It is no use reminding them that we kept order on the Northern Frontier of India for half a century, or that the Malayan emergency lasted a decade. They do not want to be colonists, nor admit that they are in a quasi-colonial situation. They want quick returns from military investments—or at least they want visible returns quickly—and they resent the unpopularity that has gone with policing the world since the days of the Roman Empire.

After Vietnam, the United States would like to reduce her overseas military commitments

By RICHARD COX

Furthermore, at all levels, from the best university research brain downwards Americans are now deeply concerned about the domestic problems of poverty, urban renewal and race relations. Over everything hangs the certainty that Congress will demand further reductions in defence spending.

Thus, broadly speaking, the Nixon Administration will come into office in the post-Vietnam period, psychologically if not actually.

In Asia, Africa and the under-developed world generally, the United States will be less willing to act unilaterally, will seek to evolve new policies towards Communist expansion and will try to reduce her multitudinous troop deployments overseas. In defining new aims the civilians will stay firmly in control of the military. Although some of

Mr. McNamara's doctrines are now being questioned, notably towards the escalation of the Vietnam conflict, his stewardship has set an almost indelible mark on the methods of defence planning, which will continue to be given much academic and research brainpower, not to mention computer time.

Nonetheless, it is embarrassingly clear that neither brainpower nor military power has prevailed in the limited time available for winning the Vietnam war, an unacknowledged time limit closely connected with the recent Presidential election. Whatever the final outcome of the Vietnam struggle, its traumatic effects will be felt in American policy for a generation to come at least.

The nation seems close to a collective nervous breakdown over the war, participated in by those of totally opposed views.

There are the students objecting on moral grounds, giving sanctuary to deserters on their campuses. There are many working Americans puzzled by failure to achieve the military success to which their wealth and power ought to entitle them. There are the military, hard at work overcoming the strain the war puts on their manpower and training resources and finding it necessary to distribute car-stickers that read: "Serving in the U.S. Army—Proudly."

Yet at neither end of the spectrum is there any question over withdrawal: the argument is over how quickly it should be achieved and how the South Vietnamese Army can be supported in the future.

One could argue until the cows come home about the merits or demerits of the American style of fighting, their reliance on massive firepower, their distaste for the jungle and for night movement. Undoubtedly, the war has weakened the Viet Cong and brought negotiators to the conference table. But the crux of the matter has proved to be—as the French learnt in Algeria—that it is difficult for a democracy to win this kind of war employing a conscript army and without the help of respected allies or the strong belief of the people back home that the war is right.

Cautious Policies

It is, of course, considered essential to keep South Vietnam in being and inviolate for a few years at least, lest American guarantees in the rest of South-East Asia be devalued. But in the wider view, Vietnam has gone a long way to undermining America's own belief in the validity of all her commitments. It is being asked whether America need really counter every flicker of Communism in the third world on the assumption that it is a potential forest fire. The lack of progress made by the Communists in Africa has been noticed.

Furthermore, the need for more positive reasoning is felt.

The idea of military involvement in black Africa is already virtually ruled out and the Pentagon had grave misgivings about lending three aircraft to Gen. Mobutu last year, even under the Ambassador's control, in case the American crews and guards became involved in fighting in the Congo. Now it will be Asia's turn for cautious policies.

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One result of this is that both defence planners and Congress are taking a close look at the overseas disposition of American forces. Japan, moving up to be the world's third industrial Power, must be exerting an increasing influence for stability in South-East Asia. Is this allowed for in planning, and is it necessary to give the prosperous Japanese trading advantages in payment for keeping bases there? Why not withdraw to Okinawa?

Again, how long must 50,000 men be kept in Korea? To this latter question there is no immediate answer since the South Korean force in Vietnam constitutes a bargaining counter of great value against any reduction in the 50,000. Nonetheless, it is talked about, as is the question whether America is not too involved in Thailand, both by military assistance programmes and by basing B-52s there.

In Concert

A second result of questioning such commitments is likely to be a decision only to act multilaterally in concert with other Powers in future, an idea strangely echoing our own recent Defence White Papers. "There is a genuine objective need for more than one Power to be involved in Far Eastern decision-making," as one expert put it. This applies to most of the world outside the Americas.

It is reflected in worry about whether America should attempt to replace the British military presence in the Persian Gulf after 1971. The Middle East was defined by Mr. McNamara as one of the world's great danger areas. Almost the only place where it is considered any President would intervene unilaterally is Israel, were that country threatened with extinction.

The American desire to share the free world's decision-making could give added meaning to the projected Conservative policy of keeping a British military presence East of Suez, although it is not difficult to be shocked at American lack of appreciation of past British efforts there. One of the Americans' greatest defects in relations with their allies seems to be a deep-down unwillingness to admit that anyone else ever carries the free world's burden. Our present Government has certainly quoted chapter and verse over this, referring to the Indonesian confrontation campaign, in justifying our planned Far Eastern withdrawal to Mr. Russett. But with America's changing mood this should not deter us from re-thinking our role. How to give greater reciprocity for American guarantees to Europe is going to pose serious problems.

A second article will appear tomorrow.

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AMERICA NOW THE RELUCTANT SOLDIER-II

The Paper Tigers of NATO

TRAVELLING round the United States visiting service establishments and talking to officials in Washington in the weeks immediately before the American Presidential election, I had one point constantly pressed on me: "What are needed in Europe are better balanced forces, better training and reserves, better stocks and equipment. If the European Governments do not spend more, then Congress will force the United States to spend less."

To an inadequate extent, this demand was met at the NATO Ministerial meeting the week before last—enough, in Mr. Healey's words, to "stop the rot in NATO."

But both the demand and the response are sadly short-term in the face of shifts in American defence policy, the significance of which seems little understood in Europe. Although Mr. Nixon has not yet indicated his future policies, one can say with certainty that in this field they are already pre-determined by currents of thought to which any new Administration would have to attune itself. Inevitably they are related to the fact that virtually the entire nation desires withdrawal from Vietnam and so the new Administration will be psychologically, as I said yesterday, in the post-Vietnam era.

Bringing Them Home

Furthermore, Americans are reacting against the unpopularity that goes with being the world's policeman, and will want in future to take action multilaterally if possible. The many treaties entered into in Mr. Dulles's time are now felt to be embarrassing. It is increasingly recognised that men like Gen. Ridgway were right a decade ago to warn their country against entering into commitments without specific attainable goals.

Obviously action in the NATO context would be multilateral, but a keen concern to divert money from defence to domestic problems, especially with foreign exchange short, deeply affects American policy in Europe. Only the Czech invasion persuaded Congress not to demand further "redeployments" of American troops back from Europe.

By **RICHARD COX**

It is thought in official circles that a substantial number will have to be brought back before the 1970 Congressional elections, and that in five years' time—unless there is further Russian aggression—the American presence in Europe will go down from its present 205,000 to as little as 50,000, or even 35,000. It can be argued that such a force would be sufficient demonstration of American willingness to defend Europe—and can Europe really expect America to keep her present strength in Germany until the millennium?

Indeed, as I indicated in my previous article, there is a strong feeling that a prosperous Europe is all too content to shelter under the umbrella of American involvement in its affairs. The immediate comparisons support this—for instance the average NATO country spends only four per cent. of its gross national product on defence, while America spends 10 per cent., though Vietnam and other commitments weight the American figure.

Again, until the pressure was put on at the last NATO meeting, the trend of the European countries was to reduce and redeploy their own forces away from Germany.

There is a diplomatic and political conundrum in this for the Americans.

Granted their sales of military equipment to their allies are valuable, granted Europe is their own first line of defence, granted European stability and economic progress are most important to their economy. But even granting all this and more, the temptation to say, "Why the hell should we keep more men in Europe than the British have in their whole Army?" must be enormous. It is a measure of the American sense of international responsibility that such naked sentiments find little or no expression in official policy.

However, nothing remains constant, and British military weakness has played its part in eroding what was left of the special relationship. Individually the British liaison and exchange officers with the American forces—we still have more than any country except Canada—enjoy a high reputation. Indeed one "redundant" British lieutenant-colonel is about to be commissioned into the American Army in the same rank, a transfer that is as much a compliment to the officer as a condemnation of the policies that made him move.

But no amount of good relations at the working level can overcome the fact that Britain is signing away the sort of international responsibilities that gave the special relationship meaning and that, well equipped though the Rhine Army is, we now barely have the military reserves to give a lead in Europe. Our abilities and experience are respected, our current capability is not. This may seem to have been inevitable or not depending on one's point of view. No matter. The fact is that the Americans are now mainly concerned about whether they can shoe-horn us into Europe, not over any "special relationship," which is just as likely to refer to Germany.

Britain's A-Force

There remains our nuclear capability, through the ageing V-bomber force and through our Polaris submarines. This does give us a special position. Our nuclear forces would be of value in clearing some of the obstacles to a successful American strike against the Soviet Union—but only some. To our 80 manned bombers, they have 646; to our four Polaris submarines they have 41; they also have 1,054 inter-continental ballistic missiles and an overall total of 4,206 strategic nuclear warheads.

Few people take seriously the idea that Britain might want Poseidon, the multiple independent re-entry missile with which 31 of America's Polaris submarines are being re-equipped. This feeling is not only because our present Government has stated that it does not intend to purchase Poseidon, for a new Gov-

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ernment could think otherwise. It is because the cost would obviously be beyond Britain's means, and also because, in the view of some officials at least, Poseidon is a new weapons system, not covered by the Nassau Agreement on the exchange of information about Polaris. No one in Washington is anxious to pass on details of the technology involved.

It is a primary aim of American policy to continue talks on the control of nuclear armament with the Russians, if it is at all possible. In Europe, the Americans persuaded their NATO colleagues a year ago that a doctrine of "flexible response" to possible aggression was the only feasible plan. This means meeting any attack conventionally at first. The underlying feeling is that the game of nuclear retaliation is not worth the candle. Of course, the argument that no President would risk Washington to save West Germany is an old one, which the previous doctrine of massive retaliation contradicted. But now it is possible to have one of America's most eminent authorities on nuclear warfare say he doubts if any President would risk Washington even for the State of Maine.

Most significant is the likelihood of the anti-ballistic missile system being extended. The pose of it being a safeguard against Chinese missiles, which was how the £2,500 million Sentinel system was introduced by Mr. McNamara, is being dropped. Congress seems inclined to develop it against the Russian threat. This is another indication that massive retaliation would be the absolute last resort.

15 to 1

Where does this leave Europe, still confident in the American nuclear umbrella? The answer must be "In greater danger." As things stand at the moment, British troops in Germany trying to hold a Russian conventional attack would face at least a 15-to-1 enemy air superiority, would be greatly outnumbered on the ground and desperately short of reserves to call on. Our Allies would be in no better case, probably worse.

When the Russians reached the Rhine—which Gen. Hackett, a former NATO commander, has said could be in 48 hours—the politicians would have to fall back upon tactical nuclear weapons. But the 7,200 warheads in Europe are American, and no American strategist has yet come up with a way of stopping tactical nuclear exchanges developing into strategic ones, which brings the problem back to the value the President places on Washington.

All kinds of studies are proceeding on how to warn off the Russians at this point. A nuclear explosion over the sea, discussed at the last NATO nuclear planning group, is one. But the inescapable truth is that Europe is still relying on an American nuclear capability which the Americans are becoming progressively more reluctant to contemplate using. The logic of American demands for greater European conventional preparedness is clear, and Mr. Nixon's Administration is bound to force recognition of it on us.

The first article appeared yesterday.

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